

## DEPARTMENT OF ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE.

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### A Florida Flower Garden in the Rainy Season.

We received lately a copy of the Gardeners' Chronicle of London, England, from Dr. H. Nehrling, containing an account of his garden written by himself. Though occupying considerable space, we do not think that any flower loving reader will consider it too long:

It is the latter part of August. We have now fairly entered the second half of the rainy season, which usually begins early in June, and ends in the latter part of October. The rain at this time of the year is not continuous, and people are preparing to make their hay for the winter—Beggars weed and Crabgrass hay. But we are never sure of a sudden downpour, not even during the brightest days. The soft breezes blow, the air is balmy and salubrious, the young mocking birds are singing from all sides, and the stranger is apt to make the remark that there will be certainly no rain today. But suddenly a few white clouds accumulate above us. In the distance the thunder rolls, and a heavy wind begins to blow. In a very short time the whole sky is covered with dark, low-hanging, quickly-passing clouds. We observe the rain in the distance in long perpendicular streaks—but it may not strike us; there may be a heavy fall only a quarter of a mile away, and not a drop falls in our locality. As a rule, however, we may expect a shower every day, never during the night, while the rainy season lasts. Usually it announces itself by a heavy wind. We observe its approach at a distance of a mile or more as a white, misty mass; we hear its roaring, and usually we have sufficient time, when in the orange grove or in the Caladium and Alocasia garden on the lake's edge, to seek shelter in the houses. No coat and no umbrella can protect us against such a deluge. Presently the rain comes nearer and nearer like a wall. It does not rain—it pours! The character of such a rain is totally different from a rain in the rest of this country. The first drops fall. They are enormous, heavy like hail-storms, one being sufficient to spatter over the circumference of a plate. The shower roars, so that people can not hear each other without shouting. When such a rain is accompanied by a high wind no roofing seems able to shut out the cataract. Another peculiarity is that it appears to rain at the same time from all directions, so that even on the different verandas we do not find shelter. Objects but a short distance away become invisible behind the heavy curtain of falling water. As I have already stated such rains may occur almost every day during the rainy season, but there are frequent pauses of a day or two and even a week. These daily showers are, as a rule, of short duration, lasting only an hour or two, and the thunder and lightning are not nearly so heavy as farther north, though the whole atmosphere seems to be saturated with electricity. After the rain is over the air is always remarkably cool and clear, often too cool for us to spend our evenings on the veranda.

The summer time in Florida is much more congenial and much cooler than the same season in the northern parts of our country, where days and nights are often exceedingly hot, and where no breeze moderates the heat. The early morning hours and particularly the evenings and nights are perfection. The nights have a splendor that seems strange to northern eyes. The countless numbers of stars are very bright, very impressive. The cool breezes charged with the strange and strong perfumes of the most deliciously fragrant flowers from the old and new world tropics, the outlines of the Palms and Magnolias frequently covered with

masses of pure white blossoms of the Moonflower (*Ipomoea bonanox*, and *I. grandiflora*), the night song of the mocking birds, only now and then heard at this season of the year, combine with other minor details to make this a land of idyllic loveliness. I would not like to miss the rainy season of Florida, because it is the time when nature is in all her beauty, in her tropical dressing, in her most effective form. It is never oppressively hot, never too dry, and the nights are always delightfully cool. The lover of nature never grows weary of the glorious Florida summer.

Among shrubs the Indian Lilac or Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) is the glory of the rainy season. The abundance of its flower trusses, their large size and lasting quality, the brightness of their colors, the long flowering period from early June to late August, and the fine form and dense growth of the specimens, combine to make the Indian Lilac a most valuable adjunct to our sub-tropical gardens. The landscape effect produced by large specimens in full bloom is indescribably brilliant. Its only fault is its deciduous character. A dense and broad specimen in my garden of the light rose-colored variety, standing among a group of Magnolias (*M. grandiflora*), Wax Myrtles, Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*, *C. lusitanica*, *C. sempervirens*), Hollies, Gardenias, *Michelia fuscata*, *Illicium religiosum*, Oleanders, Myrtles, Palms, and Cycads has a most charming appearance when in flower, adding beauty and brightness to the dark and glaucous colors of the evergreens. There are white, rose-colored, scarlet, and purple varieties in my collection. The flowers are slightly fragrant.

The many large specimens of *Magnolia grandiflora* are now swarming with birds, mostly mocking birds, blue jays, thrashers, red cockaded woodpeckers, and the noisy throngs of fish-crows. These birds are all very fond of the aromatic, oily fruit of these trees, which just begins to ripen in abundance. The fruit cones, in many varieties of a conspicuous red color, burst their cells, and the glossy red seeds are displayed to our eyes. Palms and Cycads are now in the full vigor of their growth. Our indigenous species (*Zamia pumila* and *Z. floridana*) are perfectly hardy, forming in time dense masses of elegant, glossy foliage. *Cycas revoluta* and *Dion edule* are also perfectly adapted to soil and climate. *Zamia furfuracea* and *Ceratozamia mexicana* succeed with a little protection. *Cycas siamensis*, which I raised from seed, is as hardy as the common species, and *C. circinalis* endured a temperature of 19 degrees Fahrenheit last winter, losing only a part of its foliage. The lower part of the trunk was banked with sand and the top was covered with bunches of Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*). *Cycas revoluta* just begins to ripen its large, somewhat flat, orange-scarlet seeds in great abundance. Like the eggs in a nest, they are snugly hid underneath the woolly incurved tops of the leafy points, the petioles of which carry on both sides at their base the showy fruit. We can only enjoy the beauty of these closely packed bright-red seeds when bending the dome-shaped top of leafy fruits asunder. This is the first time that I have the opportunity of admiring perfect fruit on my large specimens. Two male plants flowered at the same time with two female specimens. I shook the pollen in my hand and sprinkled it over the female cones, with the result that I shall be able to gather some 400 or 500 perfect seeds.

Along the veranda the bright-yellow bell-shaped blossoms of several species of *Allamanda*, the rosy-red flower-clusters of *Antigonon leptopus*, the blooms of the white and blue *Thunbergia* (*T. grandiflora* and *T. fragrans*), together with *Marechal Niel*, *Gold of Ophir*, *Chromatella*, *Lamarque*, and *Woodland Margaret* Roses have been produced in great abundance from the beginning of June, but never in such a profusion as now. Only the Roses made a pause during June. *Jacobinia coccinea* on the side of the house has made such

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vigorous growth that it is now fully 6 feet high, each shoot being terminated by a large spike of glossy scarlet flowers, individually small, but extremely effective in masses. On one side of this grows a vigorous *Solanum Rantonnetii*, the deep purple flowers of which pervade the air with a very pleasant perfume. On the same side of the house grows a large *Brunfelsia confertiflora*, which never has been entirely out of bloom since the first days of January.

Last year I planted several tubers of *Gloriosa superba* near a dense specimen of *Artabotrys odoratissimus* and an equally large *Tibouchina semidecandra* (*Pleroma macrantha*), both growing side by side in front of the house. The flowers of the *Artabotrys*, here called the Ylang-ylang, are not very showy, being brownish in color, but they exhale a very strong and delicious fragrance, the very ideal of perfumes; and the Pear-shaped fruits, the size of a small Plum, which ripen in abundance in favorable seasons, are also very aromatic. The *Gloriosa* has climbed up into it, and its vigorous shoots have attained a length of over 10 feet. But here it is not as showy and effective as in the *Pleroma* near by, where the bright yellow and orange-red color of its scores of flowers mingle with the velvety deep green leaves and the very beautiful glossy purple blossoms of the *Pleroma*.

Crinums have been for many years

my favorites, and they appear everywhere around the house and in the garden. The collection consists of about thirty different species, and about ten hybrids. They are always in bloom from late in March to late in November, but they are at their best at present, and their strong and delicious perfume pervades the garden day and night. The most intense as well as the most gratifying fragrance is exhaled by *Crinum amabile*, of which about twenty large specimens are now in bloom. Some of the plants are 8 and 10 feet in diameter and 5 feet high, facing fountains of luxuriant tropical foliage. Their flower scapes are as thick as the wrist, 4 to 5 feet high, and of a purplish-crimson color, carrying huge umbels of glossy purplish-crimson buds, which open in succession, the inside of the expanded blossoms being whitish-rose. *C. augustum* almost reaches the same proportions; the flowers, however, are smaller, and the buds and scapes are of a greyish-brown color. *C. asiaticum*, the St. John's Lily, is also a veritable giant, its white, narrow-petalled flowers exhaling a strong Vanilla-like odor. I have quite a number of crosses between this species and *C. scabrum*, *C. Moorei*, *C. zeylanicum*, and *C. longifolium*. The following species are now in bloom around my study: *Crinum zeylanicum*, *C. fimbriatulum*, *C. grande*, *C. erubescens*, *C. erubescens nicaraguense*, *C. Kunthianum*, *C. Commelynii*, *C. "Els-*